



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

New Mexico State Office

1474 Rodeo Road

P.O. Box 27115

Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-0115

www.nm.blm.gov

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1600 (93000)

July 2, 2004

Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has analyzed a proposal to amend its nine Resource Management Plans to incorporate prescribed fire; wildland fire use for resource benefit; mechanical, chemical, and biological treatments; and other resource management plan decisions necessary to implement the National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy on BLM-administered lands in New Mexico and Texas. The Fire and Fuels Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment (EA) for the BLM in New Mexico and Texas is enclosed along with a Finding of No Significant Impact.

Additional copies of this preliminary plan amendment/EA are available at the BLM Field Offices in Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Farmington, Las Cruces, Roswell, Socorro, and Taos, New Mexico, and at the BLM Field Office in Amarillo, Texas. The document is also available on the internet at www.nm.blm.gov.

Changes in the proposed Plan Amendment/EA from the Preliminary Plan Amendment/EA include the following:

- Treatment acres were adjusted in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 to reflect the total acres of vegetation types per Field Office and the treatment alternatives derived in Appendix A.1.
- Treatment acres were adjusted for the Amarillo Field Office in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 to reflect additional data from soil surveys of Potter County, Texas.
- Minor corrections and revisions were made to clarify the text; corrections were made in Table 3.10.
- The special status species section in Chapter 4 was revised to reflect the results of consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Table 4.1, Federally Listed (Threatened and Endangered), Proposed and Candidate Species in New Mexico/Texas Analyzed in the Biological Evaluation, was added. This table summarizes effect determinations by species.
- Appendix A.1 was modified to include a total of treatment types by Field Office; these totals provide the treatment acres presented in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

- Appendix C.2 was expanded to encompass a full range of conservation measures for special status species, reflecting the results of consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Public comment on the Preliminary Plan Amendment/EA ended on May 21, 2004. Comments were solicited from interested parties identified during the scoping process, at public meetings, and through the web page. A total of five comments from individuals, public agencies, and private interests were submitted. The public comments focused on: 1) the rationale for applying the Fire Management Categories to Fire Management Units, especially Category D, "areas where wildland fire is desired, and there are few or no constraints for its use"; 2) protection of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail from adverse impacts due to fire and fuels management; 3) thorough consideration of wildland fire use as an integral part of the alternatives; 4) protection of cultural resources during fuels reduction treatments and wildland fire; and 5) concerns about chemical treatments. In response to the above comments, the environmental consequences of wildland fire use were described more thoroughly in Chapter 4 of the Plan Amendment/EA, and corrections and revisions were made to clarify the text, tables, and other parts of the document. A summary of comments and responses can be found in Appendix D.

Proposed Plan Amendment decisions may be protested by any person who participated in the planning process, and who has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the approval of the decisions. A protest should be submitted following the procedures provided in 43 CFR 1610.5-2.

Protest letters must be postmarked on or before August 9, 2004, and may be sent to:

Regular Mail:
Bureau of Land Management
Director (WO-210), Mail Stop 1076LS
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams,
Protest Coordinator
P.O. Box 66538
Washington, DC 20035

FedEx or UPS Overnight Mail:
Bureau of Land Management
Director (WO-210), Mail Stop 1075LS
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams,
Protest Coordinator
1620 L Street NW
Washington, DC 20035

A protest may raise only issues that were submitted for the record during the planning process. All protests must be complete, in writing, and contain the following information:


- The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
- A statement of the issue or issues being protested.
- A statement of the parts of the plan or amendment being protested.

- A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record.
- A concise statement explaining precisely why the New Mexico State Director's proposed decision is believed to be wrong.

A Decision Record will be issued following the protest period and resolution of any protests submitted. The Decision Record will be mailed to all participants in this planning process and all other interested people upon their request.

Thank you for your continuing interest and participation in the planning process. If you have any questions, please contact Signa Larralde, Project Manager, at (505) 466-7637.

Sincerely,


Linda S. C. Rundell
State Director

Enclosure